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# BIOGRAPHY OF

# SHAYKH ABŪ ‘ABD

# AL-RAHMĀN

# MUHAMMAD ‘ALĪ ‘AJJĀL

## (may Allāh preserve him)

## **1.0 Introduction**

Bismillāh. Alḥamdu lillāh. Was ṣalātu was salāmu ‘ala Rasūlillāh. Amma ba‘d:

He is the esteemed noble Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ‘Alī ‘Ajjāl al-Lībī al-Kanadī. He was born on Rabi‘ al-Ākhir 6, 1372 AH (corresponding to December 24th, 1952) in Tripolī, Libya.

Although the call of the Qur’ān and Sunnah according to the understanding of the Pious Predecessors was not present where he grew up, the environment still maintained many of the Islamic values and natural disposition rooted into its culture which meant it was rare to see major sins being committed openly. His father (may Allāh have mercy on him) had a large library that resulted in Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān developing an interest in reading extensively, and his mother (may Allāh have mercy on her) was a pious woman who used to pray abundantly.

His sister (may Allāh preserve her) is an exceptional student of knowledge who is very well-grounded. She has memorized the Qur’ān and to this day gives classes in the masājid in her area. As a result of such conditions, many of his nieces and nephews are ḥafadhah (those who have memorized the Book of Allāh). There is no doubt that the tarbiyyah (upbringing) he has received from a young age have played a role in his desire to seek knowledge.

## **2.0 His Early Years Before Seeking Knowledge**

In 1396 AH (1976 CE), he began to study under his first teacher who taught him Da‘wah al-Salafiyyah by teaching him from the books of Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah and Shaykh al-Islām Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. It was at this point in his life that he first began to develop a passion for ḥadīth. He became so interested in learning about the religion that in 1400 AH (1980 CE) Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān traveled to Syria to buy the books of Ibn al-Qayyim and Shaykh al-Islām.

The Shaykh (may Allāh preserve him) moved to Dayton, Ohio, United States to pursue his Bachelor’s degree in Industrial Engineering. In 1402 AH (1982 CE) he followed that up to complete his Masters degree in the same field. Throughout his time studying in the university, he used to deliver lectures on a weekly basis alongside the other students there. While working on his PhD in 1407 AH (1987 CE), he moved to Canada. He then decided to apply for the University of Madīnah to which after getting accepted, traveled to Saudi Arabia to seek knowledge in 1409 AH (1989 CE).

### **3.0 His Manners of Studying**

Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān took his studies very seriously to the point where he did not possess a social life. He was extremely calculated with his time and was careful not to put any minute to waste. He used to attend the classes in the Jāmi‘ah (university), and then immediately head straight back home.

For the first three years in the university, he used to read extensively. He would often stay up until 10PM or midnight studying. This became advantageous such that even when he became sick during exam time, he didn’t face any difficulty because he was already studying for it right from the beginning of the semester.

His class notes were extremely precise. He would write every single thing his teacher said, along with the manner in which it was said (ie: facial expressions, gestures). Once he returned home from the university, he would immediately rewrite those notes he jotted down more neatly. He would also add notes on that subject by reading from other books and authors to include any additional benefits he came across. His classmates narrated that his notes were impeccable as he captured every single word the mashāykh spoke along with that which they did not speak.

In the Faculty of Ḥadīth there was plenty of memorization required. Some of the memorization that was prescribed in his curriculum were:

- 2 ½ juzu’ from the Qur’ān every year, then reciting it with proper tajwīd in front of the mashāykh, and the next day writing it out on a piece of paper with the proper tashkīl (diacritics).
- Names of narrators (rijāl) from the chains of narrations as well as know the rulings on them (ie: whether they were thiqāt or da‘īf or matrūk).
- The matn (texts) of aḥādīth; he had to memorize 1000 aḥādīth in his 4 years.

Coming from an Engineering background, memorization was difficult for him in the beginning of his study period since he was not accustomed to it. Therefore, to train his memory he began to write the texts of aḥādīth, names of narrators into small cards, and as he was walking from place to place throughout the day he would use them to aid his memorization.

During his first year it was difficult for him to memorize even a single ḥadīth. However, as he kept training himself, Allāh made it easy for him to commit thirty aḥādīth to memory per day by his fourth year.

#### **4.0 His Journey In Seeking Knowledge**

Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān (may Allāh preserve him) studied with many of the people of knowledge. He would frequent their study circles as well as benefit from them at the university when they would teach. Additionally, he would benefit from their khutab (sermons) they used to give during weddings and various gatherings. From his most notable teachers were:

1. Shaykh al-‘Adamī
  - a. He studied Nayl al-Awṭār with him at the University.
2. Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmī (d. 1416 AH) (may Allāh have mercy on him)
  - a. He benefited the most in the subject of ‘Aqīdah from him.
3. Shaykh Ḥammād bin Muḥammad al-Anṣārī (d. 1418 AH) (may Allāh have mercy on him)
  - a. He used to visit his house and benefit from his immense library filled with books and scriptures.
  - b. He would sit close to him and benefit from him by way of questions and answers.
4. Shaykh ‘Umar bin Muḥammad Fallātah (d. 1419 AH) (may Allāh have mercy on him)
  - a. He taught him between 1409 AH (1989 CE) and 1413 AH (1993 CE).
5. Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn (d. 1421 AH) (may Allāh have mercy on him)
  - a. In 1410 AH (1990 CE), after completing Hajj, Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān traveled to al-Qaṣīm during his school break to benefit from him for approximately 2 months.
  - b. He benefited from several books with him on the subjects of ‘Aqīdah, Fiqh, Tafsīr such as Nayl al-Awṭār until he exhausted nearly 6 notebooks filled with notes.
  - c. Shaykh Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn helped him acquire many books and tapes that were sent to the United States and Canada to support the da’wah there.
  - d. In 1410 AH the Gulf War began and he was not able to continue studying with him.
6. Shaykh Abū ‘Azzām Yūsuf bin Muḥammad al-Dakhīl (d. 1431 AH) (may Allāh have mercy on him)
  - a. He studied Nayl al-Awṭār with him at the University.
7. Shaykh Rabī‘ ibn Hādi al-Madkhalī (b. 1351 AH) (may Allāh preserve him)
  - a. He first met him in 1409 AH (1989 CE).
  - b. When Shaykh Rabī‘ resided in al-Azharī (an area in the city of al-Madīnah), he heard from him Muqaddimah (Introduction of) Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.
  - c. When Shaykh Rabī‘ moved to al-‘Awālī (another area in the city of al-Madīnah), he heard from him:
    - i. al-Sunnah of Abū Bakr ibn Al-Khallāl
    - ii. Muṣṭalaḥ of Ibn Ḥajr al-‘Asqalānī
  - d. He studied with him in the university as well as benefiting from him at the masājid by way of questions and answers.
  - e. This was a time when the circle of Shaykh Rabī‘ was at most 20 students.
  - f. He is known to Shaykh Rabī‘ as Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Lībī.
8. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Muhsin ibn Ḥammad al-‘Abbād al-Badr (b. 1353 AH) (may Allāh preserve him)

- a. He first met him in 1409 AH (1989 CE).
  - b. He studied Sharḥ al-‘Aqīdah al-Tahāwiyyah and others books of ‘Aqīdah and Fiqh (Islāmic Jurisprudence) in his 2nd year in the university.
  - c. He used to attend his classes on Sunan al-Nasā’ī and Alfiyyah al-Suyūtī at Masjid al-Harām. This was a time when Shaykh al-‘Abbād’s circles were no more than 30 students.
  - d. Since he used to live close to Shaykh al-‘Abbād’s house in Ḥārt al-Naṣr, he used to often walk with him to the masjid and ask him questions. Sometimes he used to benefit from him by going to Shaykh al-‘Abbād’s house.
  - e. Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān developed a close relationship with Shaykh al-‘Abbād’s son, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn ‘Abd al-Muhsin al-Badr (b. 1382 AH) (may Allāh preserve him) and used to take his family to his house many times.
9. Shaykh ‘Ubayd bin ‘Abd Allāh al-Jābirī (b. 1357 AH) (may Allāh preserve him)
    - a. He met him in 1414 AH (1994 CE) and developed a close relationship with him.
  10. Shaykh Ṣāliḥ ibn Sa‘d al-Suḥaymī (b. 1366 AH) (may Allāh preserve him)
    - a. He learned from him ‘Aqīdah

Some of the other ‘ulamā’ (scholars) that Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān was blessed to meet were:

1. Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1420 AH) (may Allāh have mercy on him)
  - a. He met him in 1410 AH (1990 CE) during the last Ḥajj Shaykh al-Albānī performed.
  - b. At that time Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān made Hajj with some of the other mashāyikh including Shaykh Rabī‘ and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Muhsin.
2. Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin ‘Abd Allāh bin Bāz (d. 1420 AH) (may Allāh have mercy on him)
  - a. He met him in 1418 AH (1998 CE) to ask him about a question related to prayer rugs.

Some of the books he studied while in the university were:

- Bidāyah al-Mujtahid by Ibn Rushd
- Al-Muḥarrar fil Ḥadīth by Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī
- Faḍā’il al-Ṣahābah by Imām Aḥmad

Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān (may Allāh preserve him) graduated with his Bachelor’s degree from the Faculty of Ḥadīth from the University of Madīnah in 1413 AH (1993 CE). He applied for postgraduate studies, but the administration of the University at the time was heavily influenced by the Surūriyyah and due to Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān being always seen at the majālis (sittings) of Shaykh Rabī‘ (whose da‘wah was hated by the people of desires), it prevented him from being accepted.

## **5.0 His Efforts In The Da‘wah In Canada**

The Shaykh (may Allāh preserve him) returned to Canada in 1414 AH (1994 CE) and began to equip himself to spread the authentic Islam in the capital city: Ottawa. In these early days Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān faced a lot of difficulty in giving da‘wah because the city was filled with a mixture of different ideologies such as the Aḥbāsh, Ikhwān al-Muslimīn (The Muslim Brotherhood), Jamāt al-Tablīgh, Ṣūfiyyah, and Surūriyyah. From these deviated groups were those who possessed substantial followings, capital, influence, power, and pre-established large masājid. The Shaykh was trying to propagate the Qur’ān and Sunnah according to the understanding of the Pious Predecessors. He used to enjoin the good and forbid the evil by speaking against bid‘ah (religious innovation), and issues that were violations of the Islamic legislation. Naturally, these groups had animosity towards anyone who would come to expose their falsehood and clarify the truth to the people. The rift between their da‘wah became even more apparent when Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān informed them that one of his teachers was Shaykh Rabī‘ ibn Hādi (may Allāh preserve him) and this caused them to distance themselves from him.

Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān (may Allāh preserve him) taught his first lessons in Ottawa in 1415 AH (1995 CE). Since most of the masājid were owned and controlled by people who subscribed to a certain ideology, he decided to hold his first lectures in the masjid owned by the community. From the books he used to teach were:

- “al-Dā’ wa al-Dawā’” by Ibn al-Qayyim
- “al-‘Ubūdiyyah” by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah
- “al-Tahāwiyyah” by Abu Ja‘far Aḥmad al-Tahāwī

He would also sometimes privately teach in the houses in both English and Arabic. In the beginning, the amount of people who attended his sittings were maximum 3 in number. As time progressed, and the Shaykh remained patient, Allāh aided him in his call and his circles grew much larger. He began to be invited to give sermons in weddings, and gatherings.

In 1416 AH (1996 CE), he rented out some space in a school and opened up a program for teaching children. The program had 11 teachers, 85 students and was successful with absolutely no flyer advertising, promotion or announcements. From the topics that were taught in the school were:

- Arabic
- Mutūn (Poems) of Al-Ḥāfiḍh al-Ḥakamī.
- Qur’ān

While many of the du‘āt in the city would often refer to Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān for fiqh questions, they would warn against him and his lessons in private. They would try to tarnish his image because their children would attend the Shaykh’s lessons and learn that the Islām they were learning in the other masājid and schools was not the true call of the Prophets and

Messengers. Some of the callers in the city would secretly remove his lecture flyers from the masājid.

In the late 90s, Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s da’wah began to spread as he traveled between Montreal, QC and Toronto, ON to give lectures between the cities. Several other Libyan students of knowledge upon the Sunnah arrived in Ottawa and collectively helped support his da’wah (may Allāh preserve them all upon goodness).

In 1419 AH (1999 CE), the students of knowledge together helped establish the Dar As Sahābah mакtabah (library) and it was out of here they began openly calling the people to the Sunnah. After opening the maktabah, they began to distribute books and tapes to the public, and used to hold regular classes in it in both English and Arabic, and they did telelinks with Shaykh ‘Ubayd al-Jābirī teaching Kitāb al-Šiyām and Bulūgh al-Marām. Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān would read and Shaykh ‘Ubayd would explain.

## **5.1 His Efforts In Da‘wah in Musallá Dār al-Šahābah**

Alongside the other students of knowledge in the city he then established the Dar al-Šahābah muṣallá in 1425 AH (2005 CE). The lectures and classes being held in the muṣallá were always free of charge for anyone to come and benefit. The neighbourhood that the muṣallá was established at the time was a crime-infested neighbourhood that was constantly being patrolled by the police. However, just a year after establishing the muṣallá there was a significant positive change in the area as people were very shy to commit evil actions beside a place of worship. The efforts of the da‘wah could be seen as non-Muslims were converting to Islām almost every single week.

Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān made significant efforts to connect the people to the major scholars. He kept a box in the muṣallá where community members could anonymously drop their questions, and every week they would call scholars such as Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-‘Aqīl, Shaykh Sālih al-Fawzān, and Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Suhaymī to have them answered. On many occasions he referred to Shaykh ‘Ubayd, Shaykh Rabī‘ and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Muhsin for fiqh questions as well as to receive advice on how to deal with some of the jama‘āt in the city of Ottawa. When new du‘āt visited the city, the Shaykh would phone Shaykh Rabī‘ or Shaykh ‘Abd al-Salām Burjis to determine their condition.

The Shaykh spent a significant amount of time and effort teaching the community in Ottawa after opening the muṣallá. He delivered several khutbah (sermons) over the years on Fridays and ‘Eids, gave lectures on general advice for the community, and held countless Question and Answer sessions to deal with the community’s needs. He strove to bring harmony between many families through marriage counselling sessions, resolve conflicts and rectify affairs between the community members as an arbitrator.

Some of the lectures he taught are:

- In 1428 AH (2007 CE):
  - 200 Q&A on 'Aqīdah by Al-Ḥāfiḍh al-Ḥakamī
- In 1429 AH (2008 CE):
  - 40 Ahādīth of Imām al-Nawawī (Explanation and Memorization)
  - Guidelines for a Blissful Family Life
  - Kitāb al-Ṭahārah (The Book of Purification)
  - The Rites of Ḥajj
- In 1430 AH (2009 CE):
  - 40 Ahādīth of Imām al-Nawawī (Explanation and Memorization)
  - Kitāb al-Ṣalāh (The Book of Prayer): Intensive Course
  - Ramadān Series: Focusing on a Number of Issues Related to the Month of Ramadān
  - Sujūd al-Sahw (The Prostration of Forgetfulness in Prayer)
  - The Rites of Ḥajj

- In 1431 AH (2010 CE):
  - Etiquettes of Seeking Knowledge
  - Obstacles in the Path of Seeking Knowledge by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Salām Burjis
  - Ramaḍān Series: Focusing on a Number of Issues Related to the Month of Ramadān
  - Tawḥīd al-Asmā’ wa’l-Šifāt
  - The Book of Servitude (Kitāb al-‘Ubūdiyyah) by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah
  - The Etiquettes of the Scholar and the Student of Knowledge
  - The Explanation of: The Prophet's Prayer Described by Shaykh Nāṣir ‘I-Dīn al-Albānī
  - The Virtues of the First 10 Days of Thul-Ḥijjah
- 1433 AH (2011 CE):
  - Seeking Remedy Through the Qur’ān
  - Words About al-Manhaj (The Methodology)
- In 1432 AH (2012 CE):
  - 10 Ways to Attain A Tranquil Heart
  - 10 Ways to Protect Yourself From Shayṭān
  - Uṣūl al-Thalāthah (The 3 Fundamental Principles) by Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb
- In 1434 AH (2013 CE):
  - The Creed of Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (Muqaddimah al-Risālah Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī)
  - ’Uṣūl al-Sittah
- In 1435 AH (2014 CE):
  - al-Waṣiyyah for the Student of Knowledge
  - Benefits Derived from Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt
  - Benefits Derived from Sūrah al-Yūsuf
  - Benefits of the Knowledge of the Salaf over the Knowledge of the Khalaf by Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī
  - Explanation of the Ahādīth from the Chapter of Purification of Bulūgh al-Marām
  - Tafsīr Sūrah al-Baqarah
- In 1438 AH (2016 CE):
  - Avoiding the Pitfalls of Parenthood
  - Fiqh al-Akbar (The Greater Understanding) by Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān
  - Helpful Means of Patience in Dealing with Harm From Others (Risālah by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah)
  - Sujūd as-Sahw (The Prostrations of Forgetfulness)
- In 1439 AH (2018 CE):
  - From the Manners of the Prophet ﷺ: Hayā’ (Shyness)
  - Silsilah Durūs Muhimmah (A Series of Important Lessons)

## **6.0 His Works**

His most notable authorships are:

- Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Istighāthah al-Ma‘rūf bi ‘I-Raddi ‘alā al-Bakrī
  - The book was published in 1416 AH (1996 CE).
  - The Shaykh did the takhrīj (checking) of the āyāt and aḥādīth that are referenced in the book along with some commentary.
  - He worked with several manuscripts and compared between them. If he noticed any additions in one manuscript over the other he would include them in the footnotes.
- Ithāf al-Anām bi Masā’il Sami‘ahāh Ibn al-Qayyim min Shaykh al-Islām (Endowing Mankind with Issues that Ibn al-Qayyim Heard from Shaykh al-Islām)
  - The book was published in 1431 AH (2010 CE).
  - This work is a collection of diverse intriguing matters in various fields that Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah heard from his teacher Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah.

## **7.0 His Wisdom In Da‘wah**

Given the variety of ideologies in the city, Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s lessons would often be attended by individuals who had many different ideologies and beliefs. They were also in varying degrees of understanding and faith, and thus he had to be wise in how to teach them about affairs of the religion.

However, the Shaykh never compromised in his da‘wah and was always clear in his positions against the people of innovation and misguidance, and he used wisdom in dealing with them.

In 1417 (1997 CE), ‘Adnān ‘Arūr attended QSS (Qur’ān and Sunnah Society) conferences as a speaker (while he was still upon the correct methodology). On an occasion, the students of knowledge in Ottawa hosted him for a lecture. However, as soon as the scholars (the first of whom were Shaykh Rabī‘) began to warn against him, Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān alongside the Libyan students of knowledge immediately abandoned him. The next time ‘Arūr came to the city and sat to give a lecture, the students of knowledge all got up and walked away turning their backs to him and clarified to the people his reality.

Another example of the Shaykh’s clarity in his methodology was when Sa‘d al-Khatlān visited the city in 1418 AH (1998 CE). Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān sat with him and advised him against cooperating with a certain he attended that was upon misguidance. When Sa‘d he did not take heed to the advice, the Shaykh along with the other students of knowledge all left him.

## **8.0 His Da‘wah In Libya**

Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān moved back to Tripoli, Libya in 1432 AH (2012 CE) and began to give da‘wah there. The Salafi calling there is strong and he has many students there, especially in the western part of the country. In 1432 AH he began to give khutab (sermons) and lectures in the masjid (Jāmi‘at bi’l ’Imām) that is close to his house. He also taught lessons in many of the other areas in Tripoli such as in Zawt al-Dahmāmī, Jami‘at al-Drābī, al-Mantakhūr.

He teaches books such as al-Dā’ wa al-Dawā’ of Ibn al-Qayyim, Uṣūl al-Sittah and Uṣūl al-Thalāthah of Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. He uses these books as a means to teach the people Tawḥīd and call the people to the Sunnah with wisdom. The Shaykh remained in the mountainous regions in Tripolī for about a year and a half giving da‘wah to some people upon the manhaj of al-‘Ibādiyyah (a sub-sect of the Khawārij), and he used books like this to purify their beliefs.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

This in brief is a small glimpse into the life of our noble Shaykh, Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān Muḥammad ‘Alī ‘Ajjāl. These words are not enough to express in totality his efforts, and how many people Allāh, Mighty and Majestic is He, has guided by way of him. We ask Allāh to preserve him, protect him, and increase him in beneficial knowledge.

May Allāh grant us success. May He raise the rank of and grant peace to Muḥammad, his family, and Companions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The information for this biography was compiled using information from various sittings with the Shaykh and his closest students throughout the years.